

P-2510 New Applications (Continued)

D. Application Processing

1. Verification and Documentation

Ask the applicant for third-party information to verify the accuracy of statements made on the application. The following factors must be verified:

- application for social security numbers for all household members seven or older who do not have a SSN (see P-2560 C and P-2122 B #15);
- income;
- alien status (see P-2122 B);
- residency;
- identity;
- monthly medical expenses over \$35 for an aged/disabled household member;
- strikers' pre-strike eligibility and income;
- disability as defined in 271.2;
- all factors of eligibility if termination was for refusal to cooperate with state or federal Q.C. reviewers;
- household composition if questionable;
- questionable information; for example, resources when the client is living beyond his or her income.

During the interview, document statements that corroborate the applicant's answers to questions regarding the household's circumstances. Document all verified items by indicating source and nature of information and the following factors, as applicable:

- authorized representative,
- expedited service eligibility,
- household composition,
- client's permission for collateral contacts,
- explanation of fuel and utility standards,
- exemption from work registration or work requirement,
- dependent care deduction,
- further verification requested.

Expedited Service

Expedited service must have identity verified prior to certification; verify the following factors, if possible,

within expedited service time frames:

- residency,
- income,
- all other required factors.

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D. Application Processing (Continued)

1. Verification and Documentation (Continued)

If verification is postponed, see 273.2(i)(4)(ii) to determine the certification period.

For categorically eligible cases (households where all members of the food stamp household are either ANFC or SSI/AABD recipients), see 273.2(j)(2)(i).

If you determine that additional verification must be provided because of a household's questionable circumstances, the household must cooperate in obtaining this verification.

Some examples of questionable information and possible ways to achieve verification are:

Problem: A child under 22 claims to live alone in a camper in the parent's driveway and requests food stamps as a separate household. Do the parents and child live together or separately? This is established by whether or not the child uses the facilities (kitchen, bathroom, power) in the house.

Solution: In this situation collateral contact(s) would be appropriate to verify that the child did not use facilities in the home. If you determine that they live together, the child cannot be a separate household unless one of the parents is age 60 or older or disabled, and unable to purchase and prepare meals. [See 273.1(a)(2)ii]

Problem: A household has little or no income to meet its basic or additional expenses and cannot explain how expenses are being met.

Solution: In this situation, contact the client's landlord or neighbors. The landlord could verify payment history of rent, additional household members, members who have unreported income, etc.

NOTE: A household may not be denied solely because its expenses exceed its income and/or resources.

REQUEST FOR VERIFICATION

If required verification is not provided, give the applicant a DSW 202V (Verification Request), including a time limit for providing the verification or for notifying you of problems in obtaining it. (The time limit should be at least 10 days; if the DSW 202V is mailed, allow two extra days for mailing time).

Retain a copy in the file unless the SPEC/C form is used.

If all the requested verification is not returned by the specific date, send the client a DSW 202V2 (Verification Reminder Notice). Give the client at least 10 days to provide the information or notify you of any problems in obtaining it. (Allow two additional days for mailing time.) Retain a copy of the DSW 202V2 in the file unless the SPEC/C form is used.

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D. Application Processing (Continued)

1. Verification and Documentation (Continued)

Verification Received

All applications are processed as soon as possible. If all verification is provided by the 20th day, process the application by the 30th day. If the client provides the verification after the 20th day, attempt to process the application by the 30th day, although you have 10 days to process the application. If the application is not processed by the 28th day see P-2510 D2.

Outright Refusal

If the client states that necessary information will not be provided, deny the application for refusal to provide verification. Tell the client you will have to deny food stamp benefits unless the required verification is provided.

Such an outright refusal must be documented in the case file or CATN. Once the denial notice is sent, the client must reapply for benefits. The original application cannot be reopened.

There may be instances when an immediate denial may not be the best approach. For example, a client who becomes upset during an interview and "storms out" of the office might decide a few hours or days later to cooperate in providing verification. If you think that this might be the case, sending a DSW 202V2 before denying the application would be appropriate. Sending a DSW 202V first is not required. Sending the DSW 202V2 is not a requirement either; it is a judgment call.

No Contact by Client

If the client does not submit the necessary verification and does not indicate that there are any problems in obtaining it, deny the application on the 30th day. Document your action and its reasons in the case file or CATN. If you are not going to process the application by the 28th day, see P-2510 D2.

NOTE: Do not deny applications for the sole purpose of meeting the 30-day deadline. When the client does not respond to the DSW 202V or DSW 202V2, you should deny on or before the 30th day.

Contact by Client

If the client indicates that he or she is having difficulty in obtaining any or all of the information, assist the client in obtaining it. Document this in the case file or CATN.

If the required verification is provided during the second 30-day period after the date of application, the household is ineligible for the initial 30-day period but may be certified as of the 31st day after the date of application.

No new application is required; however, determine whether or not the information on the DSW 202 is still current.
[273.2(h)(2)(A)]

If the household delays in providing the information beyond 60 days after the application date, a new application is required.

Vermont

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D. Application Processing (Continued)

1. Verification and Documentation (Continued)

A requirement for verification may be waived under extraordinary circumstances when the verification is unlikely ever to be available and obtaining it is outside the control of the client. In such cases the district director or his or her designee may grant such a waiver.

If the grant is denied or closed for other than outright refusal and you later learn that your action was based on inadequate or incorrect information, grant for every month the client was eligible from the date of the original application. Document this in the case file or CATN. If you discover the error within 60 days of the original application, a new DSW 202 is not required.

2. Delay in Processing

The department must act on applications within 30 days, if possible. We have 10 days to process the application from the date verification is received.

Whenever there is a delay in processing an application, the reasons for delay must be documented. File the verification requests and appointment letters in the case record unless the SPEC/C notice is used. Document other delays in processing the application in CATN on ACCESS or in the case file. An example of a documented delay is a request by the client to reschedule an appointment because of a sick child.

The client must receive a 28-day notice if the application has been pending 28 days and you do not expect to make the decision by the 30th day. If in doubt, send the 28-day notice.

Delays caused by the department include:

■ The department was unable to schedule the initial

appointment within 10 days from the application date.

- The department asked for information needed for only one program but delays processing the application for all programs.

Example: Rent verification is requested for ANFC and not provided, but the food stamps are delayed even though the rent does not need to be verified for that program.

- The department was unable to process the application in a timely manner.

Example: Verification is received by the 20th day, but you did not take an action by the 30th day. This is a department delay even if the client did not schedule the appointment within 10 days.

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2. Delay in Processing (Continued)

- The client returned all the verification we requested; however, we request additional verification.

Example: The client reports income from two sources and we request verification from only one source. Later we ask for verification of the second source.

Delays caused by the client include:

- The client missed his or her scheduled appointment, or could not schedule an appointment within 10 days of the application.
- The client failed to provide verification by the requested deadline. If we need to send a DSW 202V2, we will consider this a client delay. However, if the client returns the verification by the 20th day, we must process by the 30th day, or it is a department delay.

On the 26th day (or on the prior work day if it falls on a weekend or holiday), ACCESS will create a TODO edit asking you to enter the reason for the delay on the STAT panel. If you do not enter a reason before ACCESS produces the 28-day notices, ACCESS will default to a department delay which, if incorrect, will require the use of the manual DSW 220DE. If the department delay is incorrect, a supervisor must correct the system-generated reason by the 30th day for correct reporting of delay reasons. On the morning of the 28th day (or on the prior work day if it falls on a weekend or holiday), the ACCESS-generated DSW 220DE notice will be printed in the district. You must mail this notice on the 28th day unless you plan to process the application by the 30th day.

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D. Application Processing (Continued)

3. Work Quarters for Qualified Aliens

Certain qualified aliens must be credited with 40 quarters of work before they can be considered eligible (273.4a, 274.4b).

The Social Security Administration plans to develop an automated system for verifying work quarters overnight. Until that system is operational, follow these steps:

Step a. Ask the applicant how many cumulative years the applicant, the applicant's spouse, and each of the applicant's parents (before the applicant turned 18) lived in this country.

If the total number of years is fewer than 10, deny the applicant.

If the total number of years is 10 or greater, continue with the next step.

Step b. Ask the applicant in how many of those years did the applicant, the applicant's spouse (while they were married), or the applicant's parents (before the applicant turned 18) have earned income in this country (or was covered by social security even if working in another country). If only a partial quarter was worked, count it as a possible quarter for purposes of this estimate. Do not count a calendar quarter that has not ended. Do not count a quarter after 12/31/96 during which an applicant received federal benefits (ANFC, FS, or Medicaid).

If the total number of years is fewer than 10, deny the applicant.

If the total number of years is 10 or more, continue with the next step.

Step c.

1. Ask the applicant for the name, social security number, date of birth and gender of each person whose work history is relevant to the eligibility determination.
2. Ask the applicant to have each person whose work history is relevant to the eligibility

determination sign a Social Security Administration form SSA-3288 (Consent for Release of Information). Place it in the case file as documentation of the individual's consent.

3. Using INS documents provided by the applicant, verify the applicant's date of entry and that of the spouse or parent, as appropriate. If the dates are consistent with the potential of 10 years of work, document the verification and the applicant's statement on the DSW 202 (Statement of Need). Include the applicant in the food stamp household.

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3. Work Quarters for Qualified Aliens (Continued)

Follow this process for each member of the applicant household. An entire household is not automatically eligible if the head of household is eligible. For example, a child over 18 may not be eligible because the quarters a parent earned before the child turned 18 in combination with the child's own quarters may not be sufficient.

You will be notified when an automated system for verifying work quarters from the Social Security Administration (SSA) is available. Until then, do not contact SSA to verify quarters.

When the automated system is operational, SSA will provide us with information about qualifying quarters of work. Deny or close the case if quarters are not sufficient. If the applicant/recipient contacts you to appeal this decision because the SSA information is inaccurate or incomplete, refer him or her to SSA for a review of the information. Tell the applicant/recipient that SSA will give him or her a document stating that the number of quarters is under review, and that you need a copy of that document within 10 days. If you receive it, reinstate the application or ongoing case. Set a six-month certification period. An individual may receive benefits for six months from the date of SSA's initial response or until SSA has completed its review, whichever is earlier. If you do not receive the SSA document, and the individual does not contact you to explain the delay, handle the appeal as you would any other request for a fair hearing (see P-2127).